

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A single network element for a digital communications network, comprising

- a number of interface modules (23, 24),
- a first, active switching matrix (21), connected to the interface modules (23, 24),

for switching paths between the interface modules,

- a second, redundant switching matrix (22), also connected to the interface modules (23, 24), and

- a first controller (25) for detecting a fault condition of the active switching matrix (21) and for switching to the redundant switching matrix (22), which is then used as a new active switching matrix,

characterized in

that the interface modules (23, 24) of said single network element are divided into two groups, and

that each of the two switching matrices (21, 22) is combined with a respective one of the groups of interface modules (23, 24) to form said single network element into two separate units, which are interconnected by internal links (34), whereby the units can be installed in two separate rooms (31, 32).

2. (original): A network element as claimed in claim 1 wherein a respective one of the switching matrices and a respective one of the groups of interface modules are installed as a unit in a rack.

3. (original): A network element as claimed in claim 1 wherein the interface modules (23, 24) are optical interface modules designed for the connection of optical fibers of a fiber-optic communications system.

4. (currently amended): A network element as claimed in claim ~~1~~1, wherein the internal links (34) are short-range optical links ~~designed for~~having a maximum fiber length of about 200 meters and requiring no dispersion compensation.

5. (original): A network element as claimed in claim 1 wherein each of the two units is provided with its own clock supply, with one of the clock supplies at a time operating as an active clock supply and the other being available as a standby unit in the event of a failure.

6. (currently amended): A network element as claimed in claim ~~1~~1, which comprises a second, redundant controller (26), wherein a respective one of the controllers (25, 26) is spatially associated with a respective one of the units, and wherein one of the controllers (25, 26) at a time operates as an active controller while the other is available as a standby unit in the event of a failure of the active controller.

7. (new): A network element as claimed in claim 3, wherein the internal links (34) are short-range optical links having a maximum fiber length of about 200 meters and requiring no dispersion compensation.

8. (new): A network element as defined in claim 1, wherein the units are installed in the two separate rooms (31, 32).

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
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9. (new): A network element as claimed in claim 8, wherein said internal links run through a third separate room.